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ABSTRACT

A survey of a random sample of 165 Oregon school board members examined the degree to which they agreed with four standards for appropriate school board behavior. The standards were drawn from the literature intended to educate school board members about their proper roles. The respondents agreed strongly with three of the standards: that the board should work as a unit, not as individuals; that the board and the superintendent should work together as a team; and that the board should expect the superintendent to keep it thoroughly informed. However, the respondents lacked consensus on the idea that the board should not interfere with the administration of the district. About half the board members agreed with this standard but about half disagreed. In contrast, almost all the literature on school board behavior supports noninterference in district administration. (Author/RW)

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SCHOOL BOARD STANDARDS: A Survey of Oregon Board Members

Donnise Brown

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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Preface

The effectiveness of any organization, including school districts, depends heavily on the kind and quality of interaction that takes place among those assigned the task of governing. Do they work as a team? How do they share information? Do they respect one another? Do they agree on their roles? Problems in these areas can severely cripple the organization.

Thus an important area of investigation is the relationships of school board members--how they interact with one another, the superintendent, the staff, and the public. Donnise Brown's study of Oregon school board members adds significantly to our knowledge of these relationships by showing the degree to which the board members agree with standards prescribing how they should interact with one another and those with whom they work.

For her Ph.D. dissertation in the Division of Educational Policy and Management, College of Education, at the University of Oregon, Brown surveyed 165 Oregon board members concerning their agreement with twelve standards gleaned from the literature on board relations. We are pleased that she has consented to report in this Bulletin her findings concerning four of those standards. The complete dissertation is available at the University of Oregon Library.

Brown is presently director of special education, Reynolds School District, Troutdale, Oregon.

Philip K. Piele
Executive Secretary

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Introduction

> School boards are on the front line in a war that's getting hotter. The nation's grave problems of race and poverty, the phenomenon of student unrest, the taxpayers revolt, teacher militancy--all these forces are testing the mettle (and the staying power) of the nation's school board members.
> (William E. Dickinson, "The Challenge of School Board Leadership" in On Board: A Learning Experience in School Board Problem Solving, a National School Boards Association Handbook, 1972, p. 53)

School boards have an important role. They are vested with the authority to govern our schools, create school policy, and hire school leaders. They provide the very framework of public education. Their task isn't easy, given the constraints of confusing federal and state mandates, the pressure of powerful teacher unions, and the crippling effects of shrinking local, state, and federal dollars.

The many publications about school boards give few solutions to these complex problems; however, the writers do not hesitate to tell school board members just how they ought to behave. Many articles, books, and pamphlets written for school board members tell them how they ought to relate to one another, the superintendent, staff members, and the public.

This Bulletin considers rules or standards for the appropriate behavior of school board members and whether or not such standards help Oregon board members get their work done. It first examines the origin

and content of the rules and then looks closely at four particular rules. Questions considered include, Do Oregon board members believe they should adhere to particular rules for their own behavior? How should school board members conduct themselves as they confront their difficult job? How should they interact with one another and how should they behave toward their superintendent? Oregon school board members have definite opinions about the standards and have provided some interesting examples of why the standards help or hinder them as they go about the important task of governing Oregon's public schools.

SCHOOL BOARD RULES: STANDARDS FOR BEHAVIOR

According to the many pamphlets, books, and articles about school boards, there are standards for appropriate interpersonal relationships between board members and those with whom they work. This body of literature specifies how school board members should act toward one another, the public, school employees, and the superintendent. For example, Archie Dykes said, "the lone wolf has no place on a school board." Instead, according to Dykes, "every superintendent has a right to expect his school board to operate as a unit." The rule for school board members that Dykes implies is that "the school board should work as a unit, not as individuals." Standards or rules such as this one are found throughout the literature designed to educate school board members to their proper role.

A review of school board literature over a seventy-year period indicates that there are at least twelve rules for school board behavior. Beginning with William E. Chancellor's 1908 volume, Our Schools--Their Administration and Supervision, and concluding with Ben Brodinsky's 1977 pamphlet, How A School Board Operates, wuthors have made both implicit and explicit statements that specify what they consider to be appropriate school board behavior. These statements can be categorized under twelve standards for appropriate interpersonal relationships between school board members and those with whom they work. These twelve standards are listed in figure 1.

Figure 1

Catalogue of Twelve School Board Standards

Name of Standard	Nucleus Statement of Standard
*1. Unity:	The school board should work as a unit, not as individuals.
2. Courtesy:	The school board members should show courtesy toward each other.
3. Holistic Representation:	The school board should represent the entire school community.
4. Audience to the Public:	The school board should be willing to hear the public.
5. Advocacy of the Schools:	The school board should promote public interest and support of the schools.
6. Cordial but Distant Relations with School Employees:	Board members ought to maintain personal friendships with district personnel without allowing them to affect overall board decisions and policies.
7. Written Directives:	The school board should give the superintendent clear directives in the form of written goals and policies.
8. Trust in Expertise of Superintendent:	The school board should rely on the professional and technical skills of the superintendent.
*9. Noninterference in Administration:	The school board should not interfere with the administration of the school district.
10. Protection of the Superintendent:	The school board should support and protect the superintendent.
*11. Teamwork with the Superintendent:	The school board and the superintendent should work as a team.
*12. Reliance on Superintendent for Information:	The school board should expect the superintendent to keep it informed.

*Examined in detail in this Bulletin.

Two of the standards, Unity and Courtesy, concern school board members' relationships with one another. Holistic Representation, Audience to the Public, and Advocacy of the Schools outline appropriate standards with the public. Cordial but Distant Relations with School Employees concerns board relationships with school employees. Standards for relationships with the superintendent are most numerous: Written Directives, Trust in the Expertise of the Superintendent, Noninterference in Administration, Protection of the Superintendent, Teamwork with the Superintendent, and Reliance on the Superintendent for Information. Thus, the school board literature outlines how school board members ought to interact with those individuals and groups who are important to their work.

Do Oregon school board members agree with these statements of how they ought to behave? If so, why? In the following pages the reactions of 165 randomly selected Oregon board members are examined in regard to four of the standards listed in figure 1.

Unity

The school board should work as a unit, not as individuals.

A review of the literature about school boards indicates quite clearly that there has been an expectation that school board members function as a unit and not as individuals. Authors attempted to convince their readers how school board members should behave with statements such as these:

> A critical requirement of school board membership is an acceptance of the principle of board unity and the subordination of the member's interests to that unity. (Stapley 1957)

> While keeping in mind that individuals of high character and ability should be chosen, it should be remembered that the working unit is not the individual but the group. (Almack 1927)

> Confidence is developed in a board that presents a united front. (Reeves 1954)

These examples from the literature repeatedly emphasize that it is not the individual board member, but the group, that is important. Do Oregon board members agree with this rule?

In early 1980 a random sample of the population of Oregon school board members was asked to indicate its opinion about whether or not "the school board should function as a unit, not as individuals." Oregon board members gave the following responses:

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	88	53.9
Agree	63	38.7
No Opinion	4	2.5
Disagree	5	3.1
Strongly Disagree	3	1.8
	163	100.0

Clearly, there is substantial support for the standard of unity among Oregon board members. In followup interviews school board members indicated that they "don't get things done" unless they work as a unit. A board member explained what happened when his board "split on the issue":

> At a regular board meeting we (the board) agreed to allow a teacher to investigate the possibility of taking some students on a trip to England. The newpaper ran an article saying we'd agreed to allow the trip, which was inaccurate. At the next board meeting, a motion was made to approve the trip, but we split on the issue--two for it and three against. Three board members wanted to clarify the previous position in which we'd only agreed to allow investigation of the trip. Actually, all five members were for the trip at the meeting and it could have been approved but we couldn't get a majority. The item was tabled until the next meeting where the trip was finally approved. We were working against each other. This dragged out the issue. The matter could have been taken care of the first time. We don't get things done if we go in five directions.

This board member saw a standard of unity as necessary for the board to function. Other board members made similar comments:

> You have to be practical. Those who aren't team players--the holdouts--have personal vendettas and they keep us from getting the job done.
>
> If it's a 5-2 vote, then those two should go along or we can't function as well.
>
> We have one board member with an axe to grind and it impairs board work.
>
> Board members should respect each other's opinions, but if there is a maverick who's against everything and is discourteous, the rest of the board may work to defeat him next time. We can't get our work done with him on the board.
>
> Loners don't survive because we don't get things done with them on the board.

The board member in the next illustration explained why it is that "when you speak as a board member, you speak for the entire board."

> We had an unfortunate situation which concerned school closures. We were in the process of deciding which schools would be closed. One of the board members talked to a school patron in the grocery store about which school we'd close. The patron knew he was a school board member and assumed that he spoke for the entire board. But it was only the board member's personal opinion because we had not voted yet on which schools to close. He spoke about the issue while it was still being studied and before a decision was reached. The patron asked me about the school closure and I

said I didn't know yet what we'd do. He said another board member told him which schools would be closed. This board member should not have discussed it. We were accused of having already made up our minds before a vote on the issue. It isn't good to talk about it beforehand. You just give ammunition to those who say we've already decided. It's sticky how it appears to others, unless we make it known when we're speaking as individuals. When you speak as a board member, you speak for the entire board.

Unity of the board is considered necessary in order to give an appropriate appearance to the public. Those who discuss their individual ideas may lead the public to think those ideas are sanctioned by the board. Board members gave the examples above and other practical illustrations of why they must work as a unit, but some shared more personal reasons:

> The average person does not like to be a lone wolf. You like to have company. If you make a motion and it dies for a lack of a second, that makes you feel empty and alone. People--me--I don't like that. You're out there by yourself. You had a good idea and maybe they were stupid to reject it. Then you have a sense of self-pity. Once I was the only one to cast a "no" vote and I looked around and everyone was looking. The room was quiet. I stood up and made a funny face and everyone laughed and that took the pressure off. I felt under the gun being the only one against the proposal. That experience makes me think before I vote against the rest of the board.

This board member accepted the standard of unity because he does not like the way it feels to be "the only one" who is for or against an issue.

Another board member agreed that "the school board should function as a unit, not as individuals" because he believes that his dissent will not be "in the best interests of the group":

> In one instance I was the only dissenting vote. I knew it [the issue] wasn't right and I didn't want to vote for it. But, I was the only "nay" vote. A decision was then made by the group and I had to support it. If I didn't, I would feel I wasn't acting in the best interests of the group. I supported the team and my own individual opinion didn't matter any more. It was an ethical situation. I was in a minority but it was a board decision. If I don't uphold the majority it will break down the system and destroy the group. If I can't uphold the decision of the group, I should resign.

In contrast, several board members said that the standard of unity actually does not help the board function because it stifles legitimate dissent and minority opinion. For example, these board members protested the standard and indicated that a board should <u>not</u> function as a unit:

> The board says we can't publicly dissent, but, if you're functioning as a unit, you are obviously not thinking. They [other board members] just don't want you to stir up trouble with your ideas.

> I just do not believe in it [Unity]. Nothing should be done because we're a unit. Each decision I make should be based on my own opinion. We should each vote our conscience regardless.

Should Oregon school board members work as a unit rather than as individuals? One board member stated that if he "can't uphold the decision of the group," he should resign. Another said that board members should vote their conscience regardless of the issue. Yet over 92 percent of Oregon board members agreed--most of them strongly so--that "the school board should function as a unit, not as individuals." How this standard of unity is translated into action at the hundreds of school board meetings held each year in Oregon is another question. Obviously, the importance of each agenda item to individual board members will be a factor as he or she decides to vote with or against the rest of the board.

Teamwork with the Superintendent

The school board and the superintendent should work as a team

The standard of unity is closely related to the standard of teamwork with the superintendent. Like the unity standard, teamwork is promoted in the literature: "The superintendent...must become an integral and valuable member of the team" (Johnson 1964); or stated another way, "a school board must work as a team, and the superintendent should contribute to this teamwork" (Dykes 1965). One author goes so far as to state that "effective working relationships may be obtained only when there are trust and confidence between all members of the board and the superintendent, when there is a feeling of group cohesiveness and a feeling of team spirit" (Dykes 1965). There is no question that school board members are urged to work with the superintendent as a team, but do Oregon school board members agree?

When asked the level of their agreement with the statement that "the school board and the superintendent should work as a team," Oregon board members responded like this:

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	95	57.9
Agree	67	40.9
No Opinion	1	.6
Disagree	1	.6
Strongly Disagree	0	0
Total	164	100.0

Clearly, when asked if they should work as a team with the superintendent, school board members in Oregon wholeheartedly agreed.

Why do Oregon board members believe that there should be teamwork between themselves and their superintendents? One board member explained what happened when there was an absence of teamwork with administrators. This crisis involved a kidnapped child and, according to this board member, "shows how destructive not working together can be."

> We had a terrible incident where a child was kidnapped from one of our elementary buildings. Everyone was upset and the parents from that school were up in arms. We [board members] chose to call the superintendent individually and give him advice. We said we should lock the doors, have better security, and not allow children to go to the restroom alone. The parents clamored for a meeting. The board didn't have a meeting but we should have. Instead, the principal held a meeting with parents and it wasn't handled very well. A climate was created where parents couldn't work toward preventing this thing from happening again. The principal said, "I can't spend money on locks because the board won't let me spend that much." He blamed the board. Emotions were high and everyone was looking for someone to blame so the principal and the parents blamed the board. This meeting didn't accomplish anything.
>
> First, the board should have met to give direction to the administration. Second, the principal shouldn't have met alone with the parents. Others should have been there to help him. We didn't give the principal support and he turned on us. This shows how destructive not working together can be. It was months before we were working together again.

In the next illustration, a school district's problems were attributed to a powerful school board chairman and a lack of teamwork with the superintendent.

> It's like any organization. If you don't have teamwork, you have chaos. One board member told me he'd been on the board for 19 years and had been involved in firing five superintendents. That district doesn't run well with that kind of superintendent turn-over. This man (the board member) is the problem, not the superintendents. This board member was an influential man from a small district. No one opposed him and he dominated the board. The district didn't function well because he dominated it. There was no teamwork (between the superintendent and board) and the schools suffered for it.

Oregon board members agreed that they should work as a team with the superintendent, but accomplishing that goal obviously isn't an easy task. They want teamwork, but they also expect that the superintendent will function adequately, meaning that they want the superintendent to meet their expectations as a school administrator. One of these expectations is evident in this board member's recollection:

> It was toward the end of the meeting and the chairman told me to "stop badgering" the superintendent. I was questioning the superintendent about an issue and I wanted some answers. So, then I came back with, "well, I don't want to badger you, but...."and then I'd ask the superintendent my question. I tried to nail the guy who told me to "stop badgering." I was mad enough by then that my mind wasn't on the business

at hand. I had to back off because if I'd kept harping on this badgering business, we wouldn't get our work done. This whole incident wasn't conducive to getting anything accomplished. These personal attacks shouldn't be there; they interfere with getting the job done.

This board member, although regretting that he "badgered" the superintendent, said, "I wanted some answers." Board members wish to operate as a team with the superintendent, but they also rely on the superintendent for information. This is the focus of the next standard we shall discuss.

Reliance on the Superintendent for Information

The school board should expect the superintendent to keep it informed.

The literature about school boards sets a standard for board members regarding information from the superintendent. School boards should "rely heavily upon their superintendents as information suppliers" (Dykes 1965). School boards require their superintendents to submit budgets, recommendations, and adequate information about all issues on the agenda. As a recent pamphlet states, "A board does not sit down with pads of blank paper to start drafting policy statements...it turns first to the superintendent" (Brodinsky 1977).

Do Oregon board members agree that they should expect the superintendent to keep them informed? They responded this way when asked if "school board members should expect the superintendent to keep them fully informed":

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	126	77.3
Agree	37	22.7
No Opinion	0	0
Disagree	0	0
Strongly Disagree	0	0
Total	163	100.0

Oregon board members unequivocally concur that they should expect the superintendent to keep them completely informed.

Why do board members feel so strongly about this issue? One reason appears to be that board members want to be assured of adequate information before they make decisions about schools. They expect that complete information will come from the superintendent. When they are not kept informed, incidents such as the one in the following illustration take place:

> Just two weeks ago, we had a report on the cost per student for each subject in the high school. When the superintendent presented the study to the board, the board recognized that the report was not set up so that we could interpret it. We couldn't tell whether the costs were for each year or each semester. One of our members asked for an attendance sheet for one day for all high school classes so we could see the distribution of students to classes. The superintendent was so familiar with the material that the first report seemed adequate to him, but in order to make a sensible decision we needed more. We now have a second report and it made all of this make sense. If school board members are to make decisions, they must receive complete information. The superintendent is our source. If he doesn't keep us informed, how can we make a decision?

A similar thought came from a board member who explained that he runs his business, his committee work, and his work on the board only with "good information." He explained that if he gets faulty or incomplete information from the superintendent, he makes a bad decision. He commented, "lack of information makes me nervous."

The experiences reflected in the following two illustrations explain

why complete information is critical in decision-making for board members:

> Because the administration didn't keep us informed, we got faulty information and we made a bad decision. The item on the agenda was an insurance issue--insurance for teachers which was important in this case. We were to approve the agent of record which on the surface is routine. It came time for a vote and we were asked, "Are you going to approve this insurance agent?" I asked the personnel director if the teachers had an opportunity to have input into the decision. He said, "Yes, the insurance committee includes teachers. There's no problem." So, we voted to approve the recommended insurance agency. Then, the president of the teachers association asked to be recognized. She stood up and said, "We haven't had any input. The insurance committee hasn't met for four months and it isn't functioning." So here we had a situation where the teachers hadn't agreed to the insurance agent, yet I was told the teachers approved. We voted on this issue with inadequate information. As board members, we expect to be given complete information by the superintendent.
>
> There was an instance that illustrates what happens when the superintendent doesn't keep us informed. The agenda was sent to us as usual in advance of the meeting but one item had no details. It just indicated that some teachers wanted to make a presentation to the board. The teachers requested that we name a building after a retiring teacher. I had no idea prior to the meeting that they had an outstanding teacher they wanted us to name a building after. We weren't told ahead of time what the teachers wanted and we had no time to

think about it. It hurt our work as a board because we looked ignorant. It made us look inept and unqualified because the superintendent didn't keep us informed.

As the following statements illustrate, board members were emphatic regarding the need for information from the superintendent:

> I can make better decisions with complete information from the superintendent. I consume tremendous amounts of information and I want large amounts. All our decisions have to be made within the confines of what we know.

> You need full information in order to act; you can't make intelligent decisions without information. It is a failing of the superintendent if he doesn't send enough information with the board agenda.

Obviously, school board members feel quite strongly that the superintendent should keep them fully informed so that they can make "intelligent decisions."

Board members related another reason why they want to be informed; lack of information can embarrass them. One board member gave this example:

> We've got to rely on the superintendent to keep us informed of important events or we'll have egg on our face. The experiences that convinced me of this involved principal transfers. They (the superintendent's office) were planning principal transfers and talked to the principals before they told the plan to the board. One principal told some of his staff and since the grapevine in schools works quickly, they told other teachers

who in turn told their students. One kid came home and told his mother that he would be getting a new principal. She called a board member about the transfer and the board member didn't know about it. She was very embarrassed. People think board members know all of this and we don't. This board member told me about this incident and that convinced me that we must be kept informed by the superintendent. We rely on the superintendent to keep us informed so we're not embarrassed. I know it ought to be that way from the bad experience of a fellow board member.

Thus, board members not only expect to be kept informed of events that help them make policy decisions, they also want to know personnel decisions such as principal transfers before they are announced to others. Similarly, they want to be informed if there is any event that will be picked up by the media and possibly reported to their constituents before they themselves are made aware. This example explains why board members don't like "surprises":

One time we had a teacher arrested for a sexual offense that involved students. I read about it in the paper. People asked me what I knew about it and I looked dumb because I didn't know anything other than what was in the paper. I was a board member but I didn't know what was going on and the newspaper did. This incident involved my own children's school and I should have known what was going on. I let the superintendent know how I felt. Right now we have a negotiations problem with the teachers. If I picked up the paper and read something new about it, I'd be furious at the superintendent for not keeping me informed. He should be concerned enough to call me. I feel good when I'm kept informed. No one likes surprises.

Oregon school board members want to be kept fully informed about school issues so that they can make appropriate decisions and relate to their public with a complete and accurate knowledge base. All board members queried either agreed or strongly agreed that they should expect the superintendent to keep them fully informed. This board member emphasized his agreement by adding, "If the superintendent doesn't give full information to the board, they should fire him."

An interesting footnote to this issue is the response board members gave to the statement that "in order to be well informed it is important that board members get information from sources other than the superintendent."

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	53	32.1
Agree	104	63.0
No Opinion	4	2.4
Disagree	4	2.4
Strongly Disagree	0	0
	165	99.9

Thus, Oregon board members not only expect the superintendent to keep them fully informed, they also believe that it is important to get information from other sources. The implication for school executives is obvious; establish means to keep your board completely informed.

Noninterference in Administration

The school board should not interfere with the administration of the school district.

The fourth and last standard we will discuss is noninterference in administration. This standard is the most heavily promoted by the literature but the least accepted by Oregon board members. Authors of tracts that promote this standard began as early as 1917 to remind school board members "that it is the function of a school board...not to administer...the school system" (Cubberley 1917). The same author has this to say about school board members:

> They are likely to think that...they know all about how the schools should be conducted...they are almost certain to attempt what they are not competent to handle, and the result is both disastrous and pathetic.

School boards are thus urged to delegate their authority to school professionals. They are encouraged to believe that educational matters are too esoteric to be left to the lay mind (Smith 1965). It is commonly stated that it is the board's function to make policies and the superintendent's function to carry them out. As one recent author put it, "the function of the board is not to run the schools but to see that they are run effectively" (Brodinsky 1977).

The three standards discussed previously were almost unanimously supported by Oregon school board members. But many board members did not agree with this standard: "the school board should not interfere with the administration of the school district." Their responses to

this statement were as follows:

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	14	8.9
Agree	62	39.2
No Opinion	16	10.1
Disagree	54	34.2
Strongly Disagree	12	7.6
	158	100.0

No consensus exists among Oregon board members regarding noninterference in administration. Those who agreed or strongly agreed that they should not interfere with the administration of the school district gave explanations such as this one:

> A neighboring board wasn't getting anything done because of that. They didn't trust the superintendent. The chairman of that board was very vocal and intimidated the rest of the members. Every meeting was a circus. He [the chairman] made unreasonable demands of the administration, asked lots of questions and criticized all the reports. This board wasn't functioning because it got into the administration of the district where it didn't belong. The board didn't take action on agenda items because they were too busy questioning the superintendent. The superintendent called a meeting of all the administrators to discuss the board chairman's interference in the administration of the district. The principals and other administrators agreed that the school board chairman was acting improperly. All of the administrators expressed a lack of confidence in the school board.

> The board chairman found out about the meeting and called the superintendent on the carpet. He asked the superintendent why he'd called this meeting. The superintendent said, "We called this meeting to show our lack of confidence in you as board chairman." This led to the resignation of the chairman and two other board members. The board was unable to function because there weren't enough board members left for a quorum. This had been a superintendent who was working under very difficult conditions but was doing a fantastic job. This board harrassed school personnel until they couldn't get their work done either. When a district functions properly, there is trust. An experienced board knows enough to delegate to a good superintendent and not interfere with administration.

A number of board members simply repeated the standard in their own words when they were asked why they agreed with it. This board member explained:

> The school board should set policy; it shouldn't administer the schools. School administrators can't do my job and I can't do theirs. I know we have to specialize, just as in my business we specialize.

Another board member had a similar thought:

> I wasn't trained to run a school district; I can run my own business but not a school system. As a board member, I establish policy and make decisions. We have an expensive administration. They're paid to do a good job. If we don't like the job they do, we should confront them in a board meeting.

Other board members evidenced a no-nonsense approach to the expectation that the school superintendent administer the schools:

> If the superintendent doesn't solve the problem, I solve the superintendent.
>
> The board hires the superintendent to administer the schools. If he's not doing it, get a new one.
>
> If a board member wants to run the show, there is usually a weak superintendent and a strong board member. Maybe they need a new superintendent.
>
> School policy should be written by the board and the superintendent is responsible to follow it. The board must know what is going on and if policy isn't being followed, fire him.

Some board members pointed to a difficulty in distinguishing between policy and administration:

> You can't draw the line between policy and administration. The superintendent calls everything administration and the board calls everything policy.
>
> The line between policy-making and administration isn't always clear. If there's any real ruckus in the community, then we have to get involved whether it is administration or policy.

Other board members made comments that indicated they did not believe that the public wanted them to delegate all administration to the superintendent. They seemed to feel that as elected representatives of the public, they have a responsibility to be involved in the management of the schools. As one board member put it, "We're expected to be involved in the operation of our schools; that's why we're there."

Oregon school board members indicated that they were well aware of this standard, and many had attended Oregon School Board Association sponsored activities that promoted noninterference in administration. Board members recalled OSBA manuals, journals, bulletins, training sessions, clinics, conventions, and workshops where members were urged to stay out of the administration of the schools. According to those interviewed, the influence of OSBA in perpetrating the standards has been substantial. One board member saw OSBA as actually the influence of superintendents:

> The school board conventions are run by school administrators. The meetings are stereotyped and valueless. You know who wrote this list (of standards)? The superintendents. All that happens is what superintendents want to happen. School board thinking is controlled by school superintendents to a degree that (board members) don't realize.

Other board members saw the standards as acquired from school superintendents in a more direct manner:

> This (list of standards) originated with superintendents. It's dangerous unless the board knows its duty to others in the community besides the administration.
>
> These things are superintendent generated.
>
> These standards are superintendent inspired things.

Some school board members see their superintendents as individuals who promote noninterference in administration in order to keep board members from being too involved in the schools. This comment from one board member states this point of view:

> These things (standards) are school superintendent fostered. They (superintendents) want the school board as far out of schools as possible. They are convinced that they are the only ones who know about schools. It is possible that interference from the board can be disruptive, but no board should be afraid to do it, because they are there to protect students.

Should Oregon school board members refrain from interference in administration of the schools? A review of the literature designed to educate school board members to their proper role has a loud and clear answer: school board members should make policy and they should delegate administration of the schools to the superintendent. Many Oregon school board members don't necessarily agree. Perhaps many of them would concur with this lone statement which sets a different tone for board members:

> Don't leave the educational arena entirely to the expert and the specialist, even though he may claim access to "the literature" and to "the findings of research." The wise board member listens to the experts and seeks their advice, but he evaluates and balances this with the wisdom of the layperson (Brodinsky 1977).

School board members will probably continue to hear the standard of noninterference in administration promoted by OSBA and school administrators. However, it will interest them to know that while nearly half of their fellows agreed that they should not interfere in administration, the other half either disagreed or had no opinion. It is a difficult and complex issue that will require thoughtful consideration by each board member before committing any allegiance to noninterference in administration.

Summary

This Bulletin has examined standards for school board members that specify appropriate interpersonal relationships between school board members and those who are important to their work. The standards originated in the literature intended to educate school board members about their proper role. Oregon school board members are in strong agreement with some of the standards and in wide disagreement with others.

They concur that they should work as a unit, not as individuals, and they believe that the school board and the superintendent should work as a team. They strongly believe that they should expect the superintendent to keep them informed not only of pending policy decisions but of personnel matters and crisis situations as well. Oregon board members are strongly aligned regarding these three standards.

But they do not concur with the rule that board members should refrain from interference with administration of the school district. This undoubtedly confounds superintendents and puzzles those who have so carefully and thoroughly promoted the rule that school board members should stay out of the management of schools. Since board members have legal authority to govern Oregon's public schools, they can and will take a broad view of their role if they wish. Dozens of publications, hundreds of workshops and conferences, and probably thousands of subtle informal sessions by superintendents have promoted the idea that board members should make policy and stay out of the actual administration of the schools. Half of Oregon's school board members aren't convinced.

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